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MINDFULNESS AND THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIPS: INSIGHTS FROM A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS' PRACTICES

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BACKGROUND

A well-established body of literature highlights the importance of the therapeutic relationship when working with children and youth. A growing body of literature points to the potential of mindfulness to enhance the quality of relationships, including the therapeutic relationship. To date, little attention has been paid to this topic within the profession of occupational therapy.

AIM

The aim of this study was to inquire into paediatric occupational therapists' experiences of mindfulness in the therapeutic relationship with children and youth.

METHODS

Heideggerian-informed hermeneutic phenomenology was employed as the methodological approach. Two key Heideggerian concepts of being-with and care served as theoretical underpinnings of the study. Semi-structured interviews were completed with eight North American occupational therapists to elicit their first-hand accounts of mindfulness in the therapeutic relationship with their paediatric clients. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using a phenomenological approach.

RESULTS

Four key themes were identified and include: fostering a safe space, enhancing presence, being authentic, and cultivating acceptance.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings offer insights regarding the potential affordances of mindfulness to support clinicians as they form of therapeutic relationships with children and youth. This study highlights research priorities for future inquiry. ■